

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PARIS 26403 01 OF 02 121459Z

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PA-01 PRS-01 USIA-06 CIAE-00
COME-00 EB-08 INR-07 LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 /041 W
-----060270 121548Z /53

R 121452Z SEP 77

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8428

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY ROME

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 26403

USEEC

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, FR

SUBJECT: THE LABOR SCENE: MAIRE FALLS IN AGAIN

REF: (A) PARIS 25928, (B) PARIS A-2804, (C) PARIS
25148, (D) PARIS A-256 OF JULY 24

1. SUMMARY: THE LEADERS OF ALL THE MAJOR UNIONS HAVE MADE THEIR SPEECHES AND HELD THEIR PRESS CONFERENCES. THE CHIEF RESULT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN THAT THE PCF HAS AGGRAVATED THE CFDT AND, BY SO DOING, HELPED HEIGHTEN THE UNCERTAINTY IN LABOR CIRCLES AS TO WHETHER OR NOT THE COMMUNISTS MEAN TO REACH AN AGREEMENT WITH THEIR POLITICAL PARTNERS ON UPDATING THE COMMON PROGRAM. END SUMMARY.

2. THE PAST WEEK WAS ONE OF SPEECHES AND PRESS CON-
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PAGE 02 PARIS 26403 01 OF 02 121459Z

FERENCES AMONGST THE TRADE UNIONS. THE HEADS OF THE CFDT, CGT AND FO ALL GAVE WELL PUBLICIZED MAJOR ADDRESSES, AND THE LEADERS OF FEN, THE CFTC, AND CGC HAVE BEEN GIVING PRESS CONFERENCES AND MEDIA INTERVIEWS. THE CHIEF OUTCOME OF ALL THIS TALKING, AND THE ENSUING COMMENTARIES, HAS BEEN A STRONG REACTION ON THE PART OF THE CFDT TOWARDS THE PCF AND TO A LESSER

EXTENT, THE CGT, FOR -- ONCE AGAIN -- MAKING USE OF AN EDMOND MAIRE SPEECH TO HIT THE PS OVER THE HEAD.

3. IN HIS SEPTEMBER 7 ADDRESS AT STRASBOURG, CFDT LEADER MAIRE HAD CRITICIZED THE PCF PROPOSALS FOR UPDATING THE COMMON PROGRAM AS, INTER ALIA, THREATENING TO TAKE FRANCE DOWN THE ROAD TO ECONOMIC NATIONALISM, AND SO ISOLATION; AND FAILING TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF AUTOGESTION. HE THEN CRITICIZED THE SOCIALISTS, WHOSE POLICIES HE SAID WERE AMBIGUOUS AND NEEDED CLARIFICATION. THE IMPRESSION BEING CREATED, MAIRE SAID, WAS THAT THE PS WAS DRAGGING ITS FEET IN ITS APPROACH TO SOCIAL REFORM ISSUES, SUCH AS REDUCING SALARY DIFFERENTIALS, AND SO PLAYING INTO THE HANDS OF THOSE WHO SAY THAT THE PS DOESN'T REALLY MEAN TO CHANGE FRENCH SOCIETY. LEST ANYONE MISUNDERSTAND HIS COMMENTS, HOWEVER, MAIRE underscored that the CFDT was not committed to the common program, updated or otherwise; would remain dedicated to the implementation of its own platform; and called again for trade union unity before the elections, and afterwards.

4. THE FOLLOWING DAY, THE HEAD OF THE COMMUNIST- CONTROLLED CGT, SEGUY, GAVE HIS OWN MAJOR ADDRESS IN WHICH HE PICKED UP MAIRE'S CRITICISMS OF THE PS (ONLY); REPEATED THEM, SOMETIMES QUOTING MAIRE; AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 PARIS 26403 01 OF 02 121459Z

THEN SET FORTH TEN QUESTIONS THE "WORKERS" WANTED THE "LEFT" TO ANSWER. NATURALLY, THESE CGT QUESTIONS ARE ADDRESSED TO SUCH POINTS AS THE REDUCTION OF SALARY DIFFERENTIALS, INCREASES IN FAMILY ALLOWANCES, AND "TRADE UNION RIGHTS" ON WHICH THE PS APPEARS TO WANT TO REMAIN AS FLEXIBLE AS POSSIBLE. MOREOVER, AS MORE THAN ONE NON-COMMUNIST HAS NOTED, SOURLY, SEGUY DID NOT MENTION THE PCF POSITIONS BUT TO PRAISE THEM. SEGUY ALSO REITERATED HIS WARNING THAT THE CGT DOES NOT INTEND TO PRESS FOR THE "WORKERS DEMANDS" LESS UNDER A GOVERNMENT OF THE LEFT THAN IT DOES UNDER THE PRESENT REGIME; AND THAT IT HAS NO INTENTION OF HELP-ING MANAGE THE CRISIS OF CAPITALISM.

5. SIMILARLY, THE PCF ORGAN "L'HUMANITE", PICKED UP MAIRE'S CRITICISMS OF THE PS AND PUBLISHED THEM. THAT ARTICLE, NOT UNNATURALLY, STRESSED THAT MAIRE'S CRITICISMS OF THE PS POSITIONS PARALLELED THOSE OF THE PCF; AND CLAIMED BY INFERENCE THAT THE CFDT AND PCF SHARED THE SAME VIEWPOINTS.

6. APPARENTLY STILL SMARTING FROM HIS LAST BRUSH WITH

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PAGE 01 PARIS 26403 02 OF 02 121503Z

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 26403

USEEC

CURRENT PCF TACTICS (SEE REF C), MAIRE AND THE CFDT REACTED VIGOROUSLY, EVEN EMOTIONALLY. IN A PUBLISHED STATEMENT, SUPPLEMENTED BY A PRESS CONFERENCE, THE CFDT LEADERSHIP DENOUNCED "L'HUMANITE" AND THE PCF FOR DELIBERATELY MISREPRESENTING THEIR POSITION. (THE CGT WAS CAREFULLY NOT MENTIONED IN THE WRITTEN STATEMENT, BUT CAME IN FOR SOME ORAL KICKS AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE.) THE PCF RESPONSE WAS TO COOLY PUBLISH THE FULL TEXT OF THE CFDT STATEMENT, FOLLOWED BY ITS OWN ANALYSIS SUGGESTING THAT THE UNION JUST DIDN'T UNDERSTAND HOW CLOSE ITS POSITION AND THAT OF THE PCF REALLY WERE, TOGETHER WITH YET ANOTHER LETTER FROM PCF LEADER MARCHAIS URGING A PCF-CFDT MEETING TO DISCUSS THINGS.

6. THE INTENSITY OF THE CFDT RESPONSE TO THE PCF TACTIC IS INDICATIVE OF A GENERAL NERVOUSNESS ON THE
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PAGE 02 PARIS 26403 02 OF 02 121503Z

PART OF THE UNION'S LEADERSHIP. THE CFDT, AS MAIRE SAID, IS AFRAID THAT THE PS RESPONSE TO THE COMMUNIST PRESSURES ON ISSUES LIKE SALARY DIFFERENTIAL IS TOO VAGUE AND WILL PROVE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE. THIS VIEW, MOREOVER, IS NOT CONFINED TO THE CFDT. FEN LEADER HENRY HAS SAID VERY MUCH THE SAME THING IN PUBLIC, WHICH HAS BEEN DULY NOTED BY THE PCF. HOWEVER, THE UNDERLYING NERVOUSNESS IS BASED NOT SO MUCH ON WHAT IS CONSIDERED THE SOCIALISTS' POOR TACTICS AS ON UNCERTAINTY AS TO THE COMMUNISTS' INTENTIONS. THERE IS INCREASING SPECULATION IN LABOR CIRCLES THAT THERE WILL BE NO AGREEMENT ON UPDATING THE COMMON PROGRAM, AND THAT EVEN A RUPTURE IN THE UNION OF THE LEFT MAY BE IN THE OFFING.

7. AT THIS POINT, HOWEVER, THE SCENARIO THAT SEEMS TO HAVE WIDEST CURRENCY IN TRADE UNION CIRCLES IS THAT THE POLITICAL PARTIES WILL FAIL TO AGREE ON UPDATING THE COMMON PROGRAM, BUT WILL REMAIN ELECTORAL ALLIES. IN THE EVENT OF A LEFT VICTORY, THIS ARRANGEMENT WOULD ENABLE THE PCF, WITH THE AID OF THE CGT, TO PRESS PIECemeal CONCESSIONS OUT OF THEIR PARTNERS IN GOVERNMENT, TURNING FRANCE'S FACTORIES AND OFFICES INTO FORUMS FOR POLITICAL AGITATION IN THE PROCESS (SEE REF D). HARLAN

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
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Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
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Office: ACTION EUR
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Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 PARIS 25928, 77 PARIS A-2804
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1308189
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE LABOR SCENE: MAIRE FALLS IN AGAIN
TAGS: ELAB, FR
To: STATE USEEC
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/09068648-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009